

# Rev. Dr. William Barber and Clergy Leaders to Condemn Nationwide Attempts at Racist Voter Suppression

*Faith Leaders to Submit Letter of Protest to the United Nations*

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/EINPresswire.com/ -- Rev. Dr. William J Barber II, National President and Senior Lecturer of Repairers of the Breach, co-Chair of the new Poor People's Campaign: A National Call for a Moral Revival, and Visiting Professor at Union Theological Seminary, joined by Dr. Liz Theoharis, co-Chair of Kairos and the Poor People's Campaign, will gather NYC and other clergy leaders for a press

conference on the steps of City Hall on Monday, July 17 at 11:00 a.m. The group will condemn ongoing, proven acts of racist voter suppression and racial voting district gerrymandering that undermine our democratic process. They will also challenge President Trump's newly formed, fraudulent Election Integrity Commission, and celebrate those who fight court-proven voter



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*Rev. Dr. William J Barber II*

disenfranchisement. The event will culminate with attendees signing an open letter to the U.N., which accuses the Trump administration and other elected officials who promote racist voter suppression. These actions violate the U.N. Universal Declaration of Human Rights by disenfranchising African Americans, other minorities, and low-income voters. Rev. Barber will also call on the United States Congress to fully restore Section V of the Voting Rights Act, institute automatic voter registration at age 18, expand early voting programs, and allow for same-day voter registration. These issues will be at the center of the ongoing planning for the Poor People's Campaign's call for a national moral revival that will happen in 2018 in 25 states and Washington DC over a 40 day period.

“Enfranchisement is essential to human freedom and dignity,” said the Rev. Barber. “To deny citizens’ right to vote is to deny their full humanity. Too many people have bled and died in America’s long fight for voting rights. Their blood cries out against this evil. Racist voter suppression and district gerrymandering undermine the influence of the poor in the political process and allow extremists to get elected and promote policies that exacerbate injustice and inequality.”

President Trump’s Election Integrity Commission sought last week to obtain the personal information

of all U.S. voters. This request was widely decried as not only unnecessary — given voter fraud's virtual non-existence — but also as a likely pretense to further suppress voting blocs that are unlikely to support Republican candidates. Such attempts at disenfranchisement would not be unprecedented. 33 states have passed voter suppression laws that disproportionately affect poor, African American, and Latino voters. Moreover, in the 2016 election, there were almost 900 fewer voting sites when compared to 2012. An AP analysis suggested such policies, on top of race-driven gerrymandering in states like North Carolina and Wisconsin, could have given Republicans as many as 22 unearned seats in the House of Representatives. Unfortunately, while the Justice Department has long fought efforts to deny voting rights, it has dramatically changed course under the leadership of Attorney General Jeff Sessions. In February, for example, the Justice Dept. dropped its objection to a Texas voter suppression law — one a federal judge later ruled unconstitutional. More recently, in June the Justice Department sent states a letter intended to push state voting commissions to remove more voters from their rolls.

It's clear that voter suppression has a consistent, negative impact on our nation's poorest residents. States that rank high in analyses of voter suppression have higher-than-average rates of child poverty, a lower-than-average minimum wage, and are less likely to take actions that benefit their poorer citizens, like expanding Medicare under the ACA. Accordingly, this fight for universal enfranchisement features prominently in the new Poor People's Campaign: A National Call for a Moral Revival. While voter suppression affects poor people of all races, it is crucial to note their pernicious effects on communities of color. Black and brown Americans are disproportionately affected, a shameful reincarnation of tactics employed during the era of racial segregation and Jim Crow.

Despite continued attempts at disenfranchisement, voting rights advocates have won a number of important victories. The Supreme Court recently agreed to hear arguments against racially gerrymandered districts in North Carolina and Wisconsin. It also let stand an appellate court ruling striking down a draconian voter suppression law that, as the court noted in their decision, "targeted African American voters with almost surgical precision." Monday's press conference will celebrate these wins and lay out a vision for how the United States can make good on its promise of universal suffrage.

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#### About The Poor People's Campaign: A National Call for a Moral Revival

The Poor People's Campaign: A National Call for a Moral Revival reflects over a decade of work by grassroots community and religious leaders, organizations and movements fighting to end poverty, racism, militarism, environmental destruction & related injustices and build an equitable, connected, sustainable & participatory society. The Poor People's Campaign will necessarily be a multi-year undertaking; the Summer of 2017 through the Spring of 2018, the Poor People's Campaign will push forward concrete demands, build unity across lines of division, and draw on art, music, and religious traditions to challenge the dominant narrative that blames poor people for their situation. By engaging in highly publicized civil disobedience and direct action over a 6-week period in at least 25 states and the District of Columbia during the Spring of 2018, the Poor People's Campaign will force a serious national examination of the enmeshed evils of poverty, racism, the war economy and environmental devastation during a key election year while strengthening and connecting informed and committed grassroots leadership in every state, increasing their power to continue this fight long after June 2018.

#### About Union Theological Seminary

Union Theological Seminary in the City of New York is a seminary and a graduate school of theology established in 1836 by founders "deeply impressed by the claims of the world upon the church." Union believes that a new interreligious spirituality of radical openness and love is the world's best hope for peace, justice, and the care of God's creation. Empowered by groundbreaking inquiry aligned with

practical realism and a bias for action, Union is charting a profound new course for enduring social change. Union graduates make a difference wherever they serve, practicing their vocations with courage and perseverance, and speaking clearly and acting boldly on behalf of social justice in all its forms.

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